

VOL. L. 1931

BS410.J7

Grace Amadon

THE DATE OF THE CRUCIFIXION ACCORDING TO THE FOURTH GOSPEL

CHARLES C. TORREY
YALE UNIVERSITY

IT might seem to be a duty to apologize for renewing discussion of this worn-out subject, where the ground has been raked over and over, and the question is generally regarded as closed. The raking process has not been finally prohibited, however; and, what is more important, there is evidence available which has never, to my knowledge, been fully utilized. It is not merely that we are here dealing with a Semitic terminology which in the ordinary discussions has hardly received due attention; there is also in the problem an Aramaic element (as distinct from the Hebrew element) which at one significant point has been left out of account in recent years; in the Strack-Billerbeck *Kommentar*, especially, it is completely ignored.

It is now commonly held by scholars, seemingly with good reason, that the narrative of the Fourth Gospel represents the crucifixion as having taken place on the day of the passover *supper*, that is, on the fourteenth of Nisan. This conclusion is based primarily on the passage 18 28, in which it is said that those of the Jews who conducted Jesus from the high priest to Pilate "entered not into the praetorium, *that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover*" (ἵνα μὴ μινθῶσιν ἀλλὰ φάγωσιν τὸ πάσχα). This was in early morning of the day of the crucifixion. "Eat the passover," φαγεῖν τὸ πάσχα, has very naturally¹ been understood to mean,

¹ Why this was "natural," and indeed almost inevitable, will appear more clearly in the sequel.

partake of this first one of the paschal meals; for in the few other Biblical examples the Greek phrase happens to have always this meaning. See Matt. 26 17, Mark 14 12, 14, Luke 22 11, 15, and 2 Chron. 30 18. The view of this narrator would then seem to be settled beyond controversy; for if the paschal supper was yet to take place, the date of the crucifixion was the 14th of Nisan. Several other passages have been thought to support this conclusion, and I shall presently consider them, one by one, before returning to 18 28.

The Christian church has always been supremely interested in the paschal meal of the evening of the 14th of Nisan. The reason for this, it is hardly necessary to say, is the belief that the "Lord's Supper" described by the evangelists and commemorated in the Eucharistic service of the church was the celebration of this paschal supper by Jesus and his disciples. Hence the constant reference to it, and treatment of it, as though it were the *only* passover meal. Neither the early Christians nor those of more recent times have been especially interested in the other days and rites of the Hebrew festival; consequently, merely as a matter of habit, the actual use of the term "passover" has been more restricted than in the Jewish usage. The first supper of the passover week was indeed a great event, with its own solemnity and festivity; but it was only one of the succession of joyous feasts, each one of which had its right to the name "passover." More than this, there were in that week two other festal days to which especial importance was attached. One of these was the 15th of Nisan, and the other was the passover sabbath. Each of the two will receive further mention presently.

Aside from 18 28, there are in this gospel four passages which have been supposed to give evidence that the author dated the Last Supper on the 13th of Nisan. The *first* of these is 13 1, which as it stands is certainly a very curious saying: "Now before the feast of the passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them unto the end." The text of the opening verses of the chapter reads as follows: *πρὸ δὲ τῆς ἑορτῆς τοῦ πάσχα εἰδὼς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἤλθεν αὐτοῦ ἡ ὥρα ἵνα μεταβῇ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου τούτου πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἀγαπή-*

σας τοὺς ἰδίους τοὺς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ εἰς τέλος ἠγάπησεν αὐτούς. Καὶ δέπνουν γινόμενον, τοῦ διαβόλου ἥδη βεβληκότος εἰς τὴν καρδίαν ἵνα παραδοῖ αὐτὸν Ἰούδας Σίμωνος Ἰσκαριώτης, εἰδὼς ὅτι πάντα ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ ὁ πατήρ εἰς τὰς χεῖρας, καὶ ὅτι ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθεν καὶ πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ὑπάγει, ἐγείρεται κ.τ.λ. This is a tangled and awkward passage, which may be "interpreted" in various ways; but there is no legitimate rendering of the opening sentence which can yield an acceptable sense. The Moulton-Howard *Grammar*, II, p. 32, remarks in regard to these verses that "we instinctively recognise an editorial hand in the flowing periods"; but the "flow" is muddy to the last degree, and the hypothesis of an editor (in distinction from a mere scribe, or a *translator*) is as unlikely as such a supposition could well be. (1) It is quite clear that "before the feast of the passover" Jesus did *not* love his disciples "to the end"; the end did not come before the feast. What our Greek text declares is *certainly not what the author wrote*. It is nonsense, as the translators of the Old Syriac and the Peshitta saw, emending therefore arbitrarily. (2) The mention of the passover feast must have been made in mental anticipation of the "supper" which is described in the next verses; otherwise it is merely confusing and meaningless, *in view of* 12 23, 27, 30 f. (3) The clause *εἰδὼς ὅτι κ.τ.λ.* of v. 3 was not composed as a futile repetition of the clause in v. 1. In its first occurrence it harks back to the preceding context, 12 23-31, while in v. 3 it describes, with quite new significance, the consciousness of Jesus in the new scene. Vs. 1 was obviously intended as a formal introduction, in general terms, to the long narrative which follows; as it is marked off, for example, in the manuscripts of the Peshitta version. Even so, our Greek text of the verse is impossible, as has been shown. (4) *δέπνουν γινόμενον*, v. 3, means simply "at supper" ("supper having taken place"), precisely like *θανάτου γινόμενον* in Heb. 9 15. The supper had already been named in v. 1, and by the *Synoptists*. (5) The author of the Fourth Gospel here plainly takes it for granted (as in the many other instances which are exclaimed over by the commentators) that his readers are familiar with the accounts given by Mark and Matthew, and merely supplements them. The desire of Jesus to eat the paschal meal with his disciples, the facts relating to their preparation for the feast, and the institution of the Eucharist, were matters of common knowledge

and therefore unnecessary to repeat; as this author elsewhere (very wisely) omits narrative material quite indispensable for the full understanding of his account, because it has already been doubly or trebly provided. Thus at the very beginning of his gospel he takes for granted the story of the baptism of Jesus, and merely gives in 1:32f. an allusion which demands the readers' familiarity with the Synoptists. This procedure is a commonplace of Johannine exegesis. In the present passage, the only reasonable explanation of the remarkably summary way in which the narrative of the "supper" is introduced is to be found in the evangelist's habit. Everybody knew that the Last Supper was the paschal supper.

This is enough. It might be added, that when the Greek is turned back, word by word, into Aramaic, every difficulty vanishes, and this without the alteration of a single letter; also—what is almost equally important—that it is at once evident why the Greek translator produced our text. But I am satisfied to have shown, without appealing to the theory of translation, that the Greek text of 13:1 does not represent what the evangelist wrote. Many others have shown this, and the contention is valid. The verse is absolutely useless as a support for the theory of his earlier dating. The evidence, on the contrary, is to the effect that he simply adopted as authoritative what his predecessors had established.²

The *second* passage is 13:29, in which it is said that when Judas arose and left the room, while the Last Supper was in progress, some of the disciples thought that he was going out to purchase "some of the things which they needed for the feast." Hence we are told, by a long list of exegetes and essayists, that the evangelist must have dated the Last Supper on the 13th of Nisan. This, really, is a bit ridiculous. Does any one suppose that the provisions required to last thirteen able-bodied men through the festal meals of seven days were all purchased in advance? This is perhaps the most striking single illustration of the way in which the question is constantly begged. Incidentally, it must not be forgotten that the passover feast which was the most *joyous* in the whole week took place on the *fifteenth* of Nisan.

² Moffatt, in translating the passage, puts a period after the word *παρέλα* in v. 1; and that is where the first sentence originally ended.

The *third* passage which has been held to point to the 14th of Nisan as the day of the crucifixion is 19:36, which declares fulfillment of the scripture, "not one of his bones shall be broken." Quotations often have a slippery surface, and this is one of that sort. If the evangelist was thinking of the legislation of Ex. 12:46 and Num. 9:12, it is of course natural to suppose that he had in mind not only the idea of the passover sacrifice but also the precise date, for Nisan 14 was the day of slaughtering the paschal lambs. The quotation is more probably from Ps. 34:21, however, as many scholars have decided. The words employed do not precisely fit any one of the three passages, either in the Greek or in the Hebrew. The form of the verb is obviously the point of chief importance here; and in this the agreement with the Psalm, but not with either of the other passages, is exact, in both Greek and Hebrew: *συντρίβησεται* (נִשְׁבֵּרָה); as against *συντρίψετε* (תִּשְׁבְּרוּ) and *συντρίψουσιν* (יִשְׁבְּרוּ). The most natural way of abridging the verse in the Psalter is in precisely the words of our text. On the other hand, it is very significant that in *both* verses of the Pentateuch the reading is *ἀπ' αὐτοῦ*. As a mere matter of textual evidence, there can be no question that Ps. 34:21 is indicated as the source of the quotation. Observe also that the immediately following citation of Zech. 12:10, "They shall look on him whom they pierced," seems to show that the evangelist was not thinking of the paschal legislation, but was merely assembling sporadic passages of holy writ which had now found their fulfillment.

The only passage in the New Testament in which the death of Jesus is called a passover sacrifice is 1 Cor. 5:7. It will suffice to refer to Holtzmann's comment on this passage (*Handcommentar*, 1892). He remarks: (1) There is no special fitness in designating the death as a passover sacrifice. (2) Paul was brought to this idea merely by the association with the "leaven" of which he had been speaking. (3) It is not likely that he had in mind the date which (as Holtzmann believed) was assigned by John to the event.

There is one thing, however, that this commentator forgets—and it is quite generally forgotten in this connection. The whole pass-over festival (and not simply the preliminary day) was a most solemn occasion, and on each of the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread "lambs without blemish" were sacrificed (Num.

28^{19, 24}). Of these days, the 15th of Nisan was set apart as the *great* feast, the "holy convocation" (Num. 28^{17f.}). Was there not, after all, a "special fitness" in Paul's designation of Jesus as "our passover sacrifice"?

To return to the quotation in John 19³⁶. Those who prefer to reject the allusion to Ps. 34²¹, which is apposite, in favor of Ex. 12⁴⁶, which is neither especially apposite nor supported by the textual evidence, are of course free to do so. Those who prefer the psalm certainly have the stronger case.

The *fourth* passage, 19¹⁴, differs in character from its predecessors, and is of more importance. No one of those hitherto discussed could of itself have suggested that John dated the crucifixion on the 14th of Nisan, but could at most be claimed as seemingly corroborative of a conclusion already reached. In 19¹⁴, on the contrary, the all-important event is expressly dated, in the words: ἦν δὲ παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα, "It was the *Preparation* of the *Passover*"; a dating certainly intended by its author to be unambiguous. For the hearers and readers of that day the phrase doubtless held no ambiguity, but for modern readers of the Greek both nouns are equivocal. Hence arises the necessity, which has always been recognized, of turning to the Semitic terminology; though ordinarily with slight hope of gaining any new light, for there also each of the two terms is capable of more than one meaning. Christian scholars, as was remarked above, very naturally fall back on the church usage, as regards the word "passover," and interpret παρασκευή according to its ordinary meaning in Greek writings. The Jewish scholars of course do not feel called upon to argue for the mutual agreement of the Gospel records in opposition to the view long held by their Christian colleagues, but are content to show how this view may be supported by the Semitic usage.

It is generally agreed, even by those who regard this Gospel as out and out Hellenistic, that its author was a man of Jewish birth and more or less familiar with Jewish literature. Thus Bacon concludes, *The Fourth Gospel in Research and Debate* (1918), p. 274; cf. Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, II, p. 836: "ein Mann, der an jüdische Vorstellungs- und Ausdrucksweise gewöhnt war — und ein solcher war doch der Apostel Johannes," usw. Whether the Gospel is a translation, or not, it lies before us in an uncouth Greek

which is shot through and through with Semitic forms and locutions. In any document written in this bilingual idiom we may expect to find in such a phrase as the one before us a mere verbal reproduction. Those who are able to believe that our author "wrote in Greek, but thought in Aramaic" (Moulton, *Grammar*, II, p. 33; Burney, *Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 17f., p. 126f.; Montgomery, *Origin of the Gospel according to St. John*, p. 20; G. R. Driver, in *The Jewish Guardian*, Jan. 1923; Howard, in Moulton's *Grammar*, II, p. 484; and many others) would of course agree. The evangelist frequently manifests acquaintance with single Aramaic words; and it is very noticeable that his Biblical citations are prevailingly derived from the Hebrew, not from the Greek. He certainly would have been familiar with the terminology of the passover festival.

The phrase παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα is most commonly interpreted to mean the day of preparation for the sacrificial meal held on the evening of the 14th, and thus as upholding the current view of John's dating. But there is another interpretation which calls for consideration, inasmuch as each of the two nouns is capable of more than one meaning, and the question at issue is too important to permit hasty or arbitrary decision at any point. Πάσχα is of course very often used as the inclusive designation of the feast of seven days. It may not be superfluous to illustrate here briefly this wider use of the term in the Hebrew-Jewish literature. *Pesach* designates the entire festival in Deut. 16²⁷, 2 Chron. 35^{sf.}, and Ezek. 45²¹, in the earlier literature; while the Talmud, *Pesachim* 9, 5, in the later period, expressly says that *pesach* had always been used to signify the seven-day feast. It is an altogether natural usage. Josephus, *Antt.* xvii, 9, 3, illustrates it; and so, frequently, do the Synoptic Gospels and Acts. Here in John, in the narrative of the passion, there is an excellent example in 18³⁹. Thayer's *Lexicon* records seven other instances in this Gospel. The wider use has some well known variations, of which mention will be made below.

The case of παρασκευή is quite similar. It is the meaning of the word in classical Greek that from the first (and very naturally) has turned the scale in favor of the now prevailing interpretation of the present passage. In the Semitic Greek of our Palestinian docu-

ments the word is the standing equivalent of Aramaic עֶרֶבְתָּא. The latter originally meant "sunset," but was eventually crowded out of use in this sense.³ It must then have been much employed in the wider connotation "evening" (like Heb. 'ereb, and late Heb. 'arbit, which occurs occasionally in the Talmud); but here also it fell into disuse, being replaced by רמשא. Next followed the very common use of the word to mean "eve"; i. e. the day before this or that fixed holiday (cf. "Christmas-eve," "Sonnabend," etc.). Originally employed to designate the day before the sabbath (עֶרֶב שַׁבָּתָא), it eventually⁴ was applied also to the most important festivals of the calendar. (The classical Hebrew 'ereb was never used in this way; but later, in the language of the schools, it came into use in imitation of the Aramaic.) The Greek-speaking Jews regularly employed παρασκευή in this sense.

The fourth use of the Aramaic word, as the regular name of a week-day, was a matter of course. The middle days of the week were designated by numbers, "third, fourth, fifth," but Friday was always עֶרֶבְתָּא; there was no "sixth day" of the week; see *Ber. Rabba* 11, 12a, וּמָא דְעֶרֶבְתָּא sometimes occurs, but the unaccompanied term is much more common, as in the anecdote of Rabbi Yohanan and the girl-doctor, daughter of a certain Domitian at Tiberias (*Jer. Shabb. 14*): בעֶרֶבְתָּא כִּפְתִּי רֹמְשָׁא, "on Friday, toward evening," and the similar phrase in *Jer. Maas. Sheni, 4*. Numerous other examples are given in the *Aruk* and the lesser dictionaries. This "Friday," 'arubtā, was taken over by the Syriac church, appearing in the earliest writings; examples in the Old Syriac Gospels and the Peshitta, Aphraates, ed. Wright, 222, 14; and thenceforward constantly. It is attested also in Arabic, the native scholars asserting that it came to them "from the Nabateans"; see the references in Lagarde's *Bildung der Nomina*, p. 64, note.

³ It seems to have a very interesting survival in Matt. 27 62, where our absurd Greek, τῇ δὲ ἐπαύριον, ἥτις ἐστὶν μετὰ τὴν παρασκευὴν (!), must have been a mistaken rendering of the Aramaic: וביומא די בתרייהי די הווא בתר עֶרֶבְתָּא. "Now on the following day (that is, after sundown), there gathered together," etc. This, exactly, is what the account demands, in order to leave no room for misunderstanding; and Matthew is just the writer to use an old-fashioned word.

⁴ But apparently not as early as the first century of the common era; see below.

Its Greek equivalent, παρασκευή = Friday, was likewise adopted, from the first, by the Greek church; attested all the way from the church fathers Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen down to Georgius Codinus (15th century), who in his *De Officiis*, 13, 1, gives the official term for "Good Friday" as ἡ μεγάλη παρασκευή.

To return to John 19 14, ἡν παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα: the term πάσχα, as has been shown, is perfectly ambiguous in the Gospel, unless its meaning is determined by the context. As for παρασκευή, the statement that it was the day of the crucifixion appears again in v. 31, ἐπεὶ παρασκευὴ ἦν, with the further definition, that it was the day before the sabbath, and that the latter was a "high" day; as of course the sabbath of the passover season always was, its inherent solemnity greatly heightened by the celebration of the foremost feast of the year. Nor is this all. The term occurs once more in v. 42, in a passage which has its close parallels in the Synoptists. Both Mark 15 42 and Luke 23 54, at this point in the narrative of the passion, define the day as the "Preparation" of the sabbath. It would be the natural supposition—unless some consideration should render it impossible—that John simply carries on the tradition of his predecessors, as certainly he seems to. The phrase in 19 14 would therefore naturally be supposed to mean, "the Friday of the passover week." So in fact it has been interpreted by many scholars.

We may now turn to the discussion of this passage in the Strack-Billerbeck *Kommentar*. We read, in regard to παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα (II, p. 834f.): "Der entsprechende hebräische Terminus ist עֶרֶב פֶּסַח; er bedeutet 'Vortag oder Rüsttag auf das Passahfest' und bezeichnet als Monatsdatum gebraucht den 14. Nisan. Die Bedeutung dieses Terminus ist so feststehend, daß irgendeine Ausnahme geradezu undenkbar erscheint. Wenn daher der Apostel Johannes diesen Terminus griechisch völlig korrekt mit 'παρασκευὴ τοῦ πάσχα' wiedergegeben hat, so kann er damit, falls er sich nicht absichtlich mißverständlich ausdrücken wollte, gar nichts andres gemeint haben als den Rüsttag auf das Passahfest oder den 14. Nisan." The argument then takes notice of those N. T. critics who, in their zeal for harmonizing the gospel narratives, and their belief that a 'Preparation of the passover' is otherwise unheard of, try

to make the phrase mean 'Preparation of the sabbath in passover week.' To this, the reply (p. 835, bottom): "Diese Deutung scheitert daran, daß π. τοῦ π. Wiedergabe des hebr. ערב פסח ist (s. oben); und wie dieses niemals vertauscht werden konnte mit einem ערב שבת בפסח, so konnte ein Mann...nimmer den Ausdruck...verwenden." A little farther on, the argument is to the effect that John could not have chosen to date the crucifixion "on the Friday before the sabbath in the passover week," because that particular Friday had no especial historical or typological significance.

Now this is all utterly blundering and misleading. Billerbeck brings it forth from the depths of the Talmud, where he is at home, rather than from the history of the Aramaic speech of Palestine, where he evidently is not at home. The technical terminology was not Hebrew at all, but Aramaic—which makes all the difference in the world. The fact is well known, and abundantly attested; see the *Megillath Taanith*, Josephus, *Antt.* 11, 14, 6, Schürer, *Geschichte*, II, p. 19, Dalman, *Worte Jesu*, p. 2, and many others. Nobody said either ערב פסח or פסח, unless he happened to be reading from the Old Testament. The rabbinical Hebrew to which appeal is made came into being later, and, in this particular phraseology, in imitation of the Aramaic. Billerbeck ignores the use of ערבֹתָא, παρασκευή, as the simple name of a week-day (although the history set forth above shows that it must have been current and widespread certainly in the first century, and probably long before the time of Jesus); since a man might be permitted to say that his father died Friday, the 10th of January, without our requiring him to show that this particular Friday had 'historical or typological significance.'

I believe that it is nevertheless a legitimate question, whether the phrase in John 19 14 might not of itself mean "the Preparation of the passover," rendering ערבֹתָא פֶּסַחָא, as well as "the Friday of the passover," rendering the words ערבֹתָא דִּי פֶּסַחָא. (Billerbeck, 829, gives for the former idiom ערבֹתָא שַׁבְתָּא, a form of words which is grammatically impossible.) It is true that all the early examples of this technical word, "eve, abend, Preparation," are in connection with the sabbath only; but the possibility may be admitted that it was given an equally early application to the principal festal days. It is thus used frequently in the later rabbi-

cal Aramaic, sometimes in the construct relation (as above), sometimes after the pattern of 'arūbtā dē-shabbathā. There is in the *Midrash Ruth* (one of the latest of the midrashim), near the end of the section "gaṭōn wē-gadol," an example of ערבֹתָא פֶּסַחָא, meaning "the day before the paschal feast"; the reference is given in the *Aruk*. All this smacks of the rabbinic schools, in which there was developed a new terminology in Aramaic as well as in Hebrew. Probably no one will doubt that the term was first used only in connection with the sabbath (the 'arūbtā = "Friday" shows that plainly enough), and the absence of any trace of its wider use in the first centuries of the present era—where the Syriac terminology, especially, might be expected to give evidence—creates a very strong presumption that the application to the other Jewish feasts was a later innovation. There are at all events three undoubted facts to be borne in mind: (1) The παρασκευή in John 19 14 is not the colorless Greek word, "preparation," but the Jewish technical term. This is shown conclusively by vv. 31 and 42. (2) The Greek can give no testimony as to the exact form of the Aramaic which lies behind it (i. e., whether or not the construct state was employed, or in mind), for the proper noun "Friday," or "Preparation," would ordinarily appear in Greek without the definite article (like σάββατον); cf. also Mark 15 42, Luke 23 54. (3) If "John" had wished merely to adopt in his own gospel what his predecessors had established, and to give in a single phrase their date of the crucifixion, he would most naturally have done so in precisely the phrase employed in 19 14. This is true in either language.

There remains the verse 18 28, which, as was remarked at the beginning, has always been the chief support of the modern "critical" view. The Jews, in the morning of the day of the crucifixion, remained outside the Praetorium, "in order that they might not be defiled, but might eat the passover." We know that in fixed Jewish usage, early and late, the term "passover," in whatever language, meant either the paschal supper, or the feast of unleavened bread, or the whole festal period. Any one of the successive festal meals was a passover meal. Was there, now, any special celebration prescribed for the 15th of Nisan, to which the above words might refer? The well known fact has been repeated with

emphasis, in the preceding pages, that this was *the great day* of the feast, the "holy convocation," the holiday of rejoicing. Plans and preparations for the principal meal on *this* day had been made, we may suppose, for days or weeks past. If these Jewish householders would have been debarred from joining in this festivity with their relatives and friends by the act of entering the Praetorium, it is no wonder that they remained outside the door! Their thought was on the *chagiga* of that day; and the reason for their action could hardly have been expressed in any other way than in the words of our text.

We may turn again to the Strack-Billerbeck *Kommentar*, where this passage is treated on pages 837 ff. After deciding that *πάσχα* in the Synoptists invariably has the meaning "passover lamb," the comment proceeds: "Von dieser Regel bilden die Worte *ἵνα ... φάγωσιν τὸ πάσχα* Joh. 18:28 keine Ausnahme; sie sind also zu übersetzen: 'damit sie das Passahlamm äßen.' This would seem to render further discussion unnecessary; the question is nevertheless reopened. 'Man sagt, *πάσχα* müsse nicht notwendig das 'Passahlamm' bezeichnen, es könne auch das während des ganzen Passahfestes und besonders am 1. Passahfeiertag (15. Nisan) darzubringende Festopfer *חֲדָשׁ* bezeichnen. Als Beleg für diese Bedeutung von *חֲדָשׁ* führt man an Deut. 16:2 f.; 2 Chr. 35:7-9. Die Stellen beweisen in der Tat, was sie beweisen sollen: *חֲדָשׁ* kann unter Umständen 'Passahfestopfer' bedeuten; aber nur... wenn der Zusammenhang es notwendig fordert.' (Of course; the question at issue is precisely this, whether the "Zusammenhang" does not require it.) The matter of the ceremonial defilement is then treated, with citation of the Talmudic passages, and the conclusion is reached: "Nach diesen Stellen gestattet die Bemerkung des Apostels: *ἵνα μὴ μανθῶσιν* keinerlei Schluß darauf, ob mit dem *πάσχα*, dessen Essen bevorstand, daß Passahlamm des 14. Nisan oder die Passahchagiga des 15. Nisan gemeint sei." (Billerbeck's profoundly learned account of the Talmudic prescriptions is always most helpful; and the care and accuracy with which these great collections are made merit both the admiration and the gratitude of all scholars.) He then concludes: 'Since the Fourth Gospel was written for Gentile Christians, who hardly had knowledge of the passover customs, and since we are under no obligation to take the word *päscha* in

other than its ordinary sense, the conclusion is unavoidable that the intended date of the crucifixion was the 14th of Nisan.' This is interesting as showing the variety of questions that can be begged in a single sentence.

The phrase "eat the passover," then—as Billerbeck also shows—could perfectly well apply to the *chagiga* offerings of the 15th of Nisan, if the author of the Gospel believed his narrative—and those of his predecessors—to have provided a basis for the understanding.

There are other facts in regard to *φαγεῖν τὸ πάσχα*, which for the sake of completeness deserve to be set forth. There is evidence that the phrase was sometimes loosely used in the very general sense, "observe the festival." Abbreviated forms of expression would inevitably arise in ordinary usage and become current in the terminology of this most important of the Jewish feasts. The idiom "slaughter the passover," meaning the paschal lamb, is an example. To speak of "eating" the festival might seem to lay undue stress on one feature of the celebration. It is however a feature which is always given a foremost place in the prescription for the Hebrew occasions of rejoicing. "Go to your homes, eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto him for whom nothing is prepared... And all the people went their way, to eat and to drink and to send portions, and to make great mirth" (Neh. 8:10, 12). The joyous holidays have always been, and will ever be, occasions of feasting, in whatever land or nation. Families and friends sit down together and *eat*; and the keen anticipation of this feature of the observance is hardly confined to the youngest members of our families. We say we are going to have a "feast," and in saying this we have limited the term, which originally signified a holiday, to our gastronomic performance. We can even imagine an invitation given in this matter-of-fact way: "Will you eat Thanksgiving with us?"

Such abbreviation as this is common enough in Semitic speech. We have a perfect example in the Mohammedan phrase, "to fast Ramadan," where the month is the direct object of the verb. Thus Mohammed says in the Koran (2: 181), "When this month comes around to any one of you, let him *fast it* (*yaṣumhū*)." It would be perfectly natural and idiomatic, in either Hebrew or Aramaic, to

speak of "eating the passover festival," meaning the sacrificial meals (*shelamim*) of the successive days. It was a feast of gladness and thanksgiving (Ezra 6 22, 2 Chron. 30 21).

By a happy chance we are given an example of the actual abbreviation, and therefore are not reduced to mere conjecture. In the account of Hezekiah's passover given in 2 Chron. 30, we read in v. 21: "And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness"; and v. 22 continues: "So they ate the feast (וַיֵּאָכְלוּ אֶת־הַמִּצֵּה), the seven days, offering the sacrifices of the festal meals (שְׁלָמִים), and giving thanks to the Lord, the God of their fathers." Our Hebrew text is certainly what was originally written, in spite of the 'improvement' in the Greek version, καὶ συνετέλεσαν = וַיֵּאָכְלוּ.⁵ A literal rendering of the Hebrew sounds barbarous in English, as it does in Greek. Our English versions, including that of the Jewish Publication Society, read: "So they did eat throughout the feast for the seven days." But this is too much eating; besides being untrue to the Hebrew: אֶת־הַמִּצֵּה does not mean "throughout the feast." The late Professor E. L. Curtis (in the *Int. Crit. Comm.*) rendered: "they did eat the offerings of the feast seven days"; and of course it was out of this idea, though hardly from this form of words, that the abbreviation originated. What the phrase means is, precisely, "they celebrated the feast," ἐφάγον τὸ πάσχα. Such a popular locution might not often appear in literature; but if it had not been much used, the Chronicler would not have employed it. It need not be brought into connection with John 18 28, for in that passage another explanation is obviously better. A wider Talmudic use of *pesach*, to mean the *festal offerings* of the successive days (שְׁלָמֵי פֶסַח), corresponding to the paraphrase employed by Curtis (see above) is set forth by Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, p. 837 f.

The foregoing investigation has, I think, thrown some new light on the matter of "John's" dating of the crucifixion. It was decreed

⁵ The late Professor Kittel, in his commentary on the Books of Chronicles, and also in his *Biblia Hebraica*, adopted the Greek reading; but there are well known principles of textual criticism, and it is probable that few, if any, of his expert colleagues have duplicated his 'emendation.' It is obvious that our Hebrew could never have been derived from the reading implied by the Greek—unless "eating the festival" was the ordinary idiom!

by the fates that the passion narrative in the Fourth Gospel should make trouble for exegetes. The various uses of *pischā*, πᾶσχα; the un-Greek technical term *παρασκευή*; the curious accident of a misleading quotation; the corruption of the text of 13 1—these have provided a series of pitfalls for the reader of the Greek text. In addition to this is the obscurity resulting from the evangelist's tacit assumption (where for him convenient) of the Synoptic account.

The Palestinian terminology here illustrated can neither be ignored nor made of small consequence. Its history has never before been set forth, as far as I am aware. It is quite certain that the only rendering of *παρασκευὴ τοῦ πᾶσχα* (19 14) clearly justified by the evidence which we now possess is "Friday of the passover week," the Palestinian Greek technical term corresponding to the Aramaic *arubtā dī pischā*. It is equally certain that *φαγεῖν τὸ πάσχα* in 18 28 cannot be claimed as evidence for the earlier dating.

Where, then, is to be found any scrap of such evidence? It is plain that for the settlement of so important a question as this no appeal can be made to passages which confessedly are ambiguous. The author of the Fourth Gospel was perfectly familiar with the clear and repeated assertion of the Synoptists that the Last Supper was the paschal meal, and that the crucifixion took place on the following day, that is, on the 15th of Nisan. He knew that the gospels of Mark and Matthew (at least) were before the public; doubtless also, that they were familiar to many of those for whom he himself was writing. He does not by any means feel bound by their picture of events—his purpose is very different from theirs; but here, in the dating of this supreme event, is obviously a case where, if he differs, he must do so distinctly. Since he does *not* do this, since also the phrases which he employs would have seemed to Palestinian readers⁶ in his day merely corroborative of the Synoptic accounts, it would seem that the conclusion that he dated the crucifixion on the 15th of Nisan has the right of way.

⁶ Whether he wrote in Palestine, or in Ephesus, or in some other quarter of the world, he certainly was not deliberately employing ambiguous modes of speech.